

# Byron L. Dorgan

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## **DORGAN JOINS FARM MARCHERS IN WASHINGTON IN RALLY FOR NEW FARM PROGRAM**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) — U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) joined more than two thousand family farmers gathered on the National Mall here Monday in a rally that called for a new federal farm policy to replace the failed "Freedom to Farm" program.

Dorgan, who has used his chairmanship of the Senate's Democratic Policy Committee to force the issue of re-writing the farm program onto the Senate's agenda, called for broad reforms of the nation's farm, trade and market concentration policies and outlined what he believes a new farm program should look like.

More than 450 North Dakota family farmers were among those who came to Capitol Hill to give first hand accounts of the economic disaster sweeping through family farms across rural America because of the inability of the current farm program to respond to prolonged price collapse, and to urge Congress to write a new farm program.

Dorgan, who is also a member of the Senate's Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, said Congress should act "immediately" to write a new farm program and enact other reforms which would contain the following elements:

- Safety net: A new farm program should restore a "decent safety net" so when prices collapse, family farmers are still able to have some income and get a fair return for their products.
- Targeted program: Any new farm program should target support on family farmers and family sized farming operations.
- Planting flexibility: One aspect of "Freedom to Farm" that has been successful is the planting flexibility it allows farmers. Dorgan said that should be retained.
- Restoration of competition: Farm markets and transportation networks serving rural areas have become so concentrated that market competition — essential to a farmer's ability to get a fair price -- is almost a thing of the past, Dorgan said. Congress needs to step in and restore competition to the market place.
- Trade Reform: Congress should insist that a number of international trade agreements be re-negotiated to support the interests of family farmers. "We need to force open foreign markets and demand that trade between the United States and our trading partners is fair trade," Dorgan said.

"Some people think family farms are like the diner along side the highway that got left behind when the interstate went through, quaint but obsolete," Dorgan said. "They couldn't be more wrong. Family farms are an essential part of our community and they must be an important part of our economic future."

"We decide what kind of future we'll have through the decisions made right here in Congress," Dorgan said, "and I thank each and every one of you for coming here to help deliver that message."

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